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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: ASEAN; ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

TOPICS:

- [1](#)1. ASEAN
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HEADLINES AND EXCERPTS:

[1](#)1. ASEAN

"This time, Asean must turn words into action"

The independent English-language South China Morning Post remarked in an editorial (3/2): "Southeast Asian leaders are making the right noises about the global economic crisis. They ended their annual summit yesterday by pledging a firm commitment to free trade and fighting protectionism in their bid to form a single market by [1](#)2015. There could be no wiser sentiments to tackle the downturn and ensure the region's development. For all the comforting words, though, a huge question mark remains; the nations have a poor record of turning rhetoric into action.... Asean is capable of landmark deals - it struck a free-trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand in Thailand and pacts with China and India are in the pipeline. The grouping, China, Japan and South Korea decided last month to expand by half an emergency currency fund likely to be set up later this year. These are positive signs, but Asean's record does not inspire optimism. Nonetheless, its leaders have recognized the need to take the crisis seriously and have signed the necessary agreements to tackle it. For the sake of their people, they now have to set aside past practices and adhere to the principles of free trade. They must realize that a beggar-thy-neighbor approach will only make things worse."

[1](#)2. Economic stimulus package

"Obama must be careful to not mess up the order of priority"

The independent Chinese-language Ming Pao Daily News had an editorial (3/1): "...While Obama was still enjoying high popularity ratings when he delivered his speech to the Congress last week, newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic expressed their doubts. The liberal Washington Post bluntly reminded Obama in its editorial 'The President's priorities' on Wednesday that he must set priorities, the order of which cannot be altered. The next day, Financial Times said in its editorial, 'Obama's first State of the Union' that Obama's remarks to the Congress were a 'fine speech' but it is time to follow up with details. These two editorials highlight the worries of Europe and the U.S. Although Obama is charismatic, no achievement has been seen from the economic rescue measures. Saving the economy is as urgent as putting out a fire; people cannot wait any longer.... Obama is not a profligate son of rich parents who rises to the White House easily. Instead, he has ascended step by step to the peak of politics from an Illinois representative to U.S. Senator and eventually won a landslide

victory in the presidential election. Thus, Obama should be able to understand the feelings of the general public. When families have no money and their jobs are uncertain, people can only place their hopes on the economic stimulus plan. Healthcare, energy and education are all important issues but they are not as pressing as rescuing the economy. Only when the economy recovers, can the country have more resources to better develop the above three issues. The two papers criticized Obama for fear that he may not know how to set his priorities and miss the opportunity."

DONOVAN